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# INTERFAITH RELATIONS AND RELIGIOUS TOURISM PRACTICES AT BATU GAMBIR SACRED SITES: SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF HINDU-ISLAM PILGRIMAGE ACTIVITIES

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## ABSTRACT

This research looks into how Hindus and Muslims get along in Batu Gambir, a sacred spot in Julah Village, Bali, by studying their religious trips and pilgrimages. It explores how doing pilgrimages together, participating in rituals, and looking after holy places help bring people together and change the local economy. Using a qualitative method that involves observing and understanding the culture, the researchers gathered information by joining in activities, talking to people, and looking at records of the religious tourism. The study found that the relationship between Hindus and Muslims in Batu Gambir is kept alive by symbolic rituals, economic partnerships built on trust for pilgrimage services, and flexible local leaders who manage the holy sites. Religious tourism here isn't just about spiritual journeys; it's also a way to build solidarity between religions and create economic opportunities from pilgrimages that help people make a living. The way spirituality, social customs, and economic dealings come together in these pilgrimages creates a lasting way for different religions to live side-by-side, all centered around shared holy places. This work adds to the conversation about religious tourism and pilgrimages by showing how people from different faiths interacting at sacred sites can lead to social harmony and also boost the local economy.

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**KEYWORDS:** Religious Tourism, Pilgrimage, Interfaith Relations, Sacred Sites, Hindu-Islam, Socio-Economic Impacts

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is known for being a diverse country with many different ethnic groups, cultures, and religions. In this kind of society, this diversity can lead to different results, from conflicts based on who you are to lasting peace between different religions. While a lot of research has looked at areas where conflict happens, not much has been done to study local communities where people of different faiths get along because of their daily religious habits and shared holy places. A good example of this is in Batu Gambir Hamlet, in North Bali. Here, Hindu and Muslim people have lived together peacefully for hundreds of years, in a place shaped by its sacred sites and the journeys people make to visit them.

In Batu Gambir, the peace between different religions isn't just because of rules or government plans. It happens naturally through everyday interactions related to religious ceremonies, the tradition of going on pilgrimages, and working together to take care of the holy places. Hindus and Muslims join in each other's religious celebrations, help with activities for pilgrims, and cooperate around the sacred sites that draw people from both the local area and elsewhere. These actions make Batu Gambir not just a place where different religions coexist, but also a destination for religious tourism, where people traveling for spiritual reasons and community interaction come together.

What happens in Batu Gambir shows how religious tourism and pilgrimages act as social tools that help maintain unity between different faiths. Based on Giddens' (1984) idea of social structuration, regularly taking part in rituals, welcoming pilgrims, and working together in business help keep the social order steady and peaceful. Basically, in this situation, being religious isn't about keeping people out, but more about giving people a moral and spiritual boost that brings them closer together, thanks to shared religious places and trips to holy sites.

Plus, the pilgrimage stuff happening in Batu Gambir actually has effects on the economy and society that go way beyond just spiritual stuff. The folks living there get a boost from the economic activities that pop up because of the pilgrimages, like little shops, services people offer, and how they all manage the resources around the holy spots together. These money-making interactions are built on trust between different religious groups, showing how religious travel can actually make communities stronger and help people make a living at the same time.

What this study wants to do is look at how Hindus and Muslims get along through religious travel and pilgrimages at the Batu Gambir holy sites. It also wants to see how these things affect the local economy and the way the community is structured, and figure out how having these shared holy places helps build lasting peace between different religions. By using Batu Gambir as an example, this research hopes to add to the bigger conversations about religious tourism and pilgrimages by showing how different faiths working together can create communities that are both socially connected and economically stable.

## 2. METHODS

Here's how we went about studying interfaith relations and religious tourism at the Batu Gambir sacred sites. Our approach involved several steps: figuring out the research plan, identifying the location and who we would talk to, deciding on how to gather information and what tools to use, and finally, how to make sense of the data and ensure it was reliable. Since this was a qualitative study, we paid close attention to where the researcher stood in relation to the study, how involved they were in the field, and how we confirmed our interpretations of what we found.

### 2.1. Research Design

We chose a qualitative method called interpretive ethnography for this study. It's a great fit for understanding religious tourism and pilgrimages, as these are really cultural activities deeply tied to meaning. Interpretive ethnography helps us see how pilgrimages at these holy places are not just about religious expression, but also where people from different faiths connect and economic stuff happens (Spradley, 1980; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

Following Clifford Geertz's idea that culture is like a set of symbols, we looked at pilgrimage rituals, visits to sacred spots, and how people from different religions interact in religious tourism as symbolic actions. Through these actions, things like getting along, feeling spiritual, and working together economically are constantly being worked out. This way, we could go beyond just describing what happened during tourism and really get a deeper understanding of how Hindu and Muslim communities in Batu Gambir make sense of the sacred places they share and their experiences during pilgrimages (Ricoeur, 1976).

We did our research in Batu Gambir Hamlet, which is in Julah Village, Tejakula Subdistrict,

Buleleng Regency, Bali Province. We picked this spot on purpose because people of different religions have been living together there peacefully for a long time, and it's a place where local religious tourism happens, bringing together Hindu and Muslim pilgrimage traditions.

For over two hundred years, the sacred spots at Batu Gambir have been important for both religious practices and people's livelihoods, which makes it a great place to study how different religions get along when people visit for spiritual reasons ((Sutarto, 2012; Subagiasta, 2020).

## **2.2. Data Collection Techniques and Instrument Development**

We gathered information from both first-hand and existing sources. First-hand information came from watching things happen, talking deeply with people, and keeping records from the field. Watching events, especially those related to pilgrimages at the sacred sites of Batu Gambir, included observing Hindu temple festivals (piodalan), community efforts to maintain holy places, and Islamic religious events that draw people from outside the local area. We watched these to see how different faiths interacted, how people participated, and the economic side of these pilgrimage traditions.

To get deeper insights, we chatted with village elders, religious figures, the hamlet chief, local shopkeepers, social studies teachers, and residents from both Hindu and Muslim backgrounds. These conversations aimed to understand how people viewed the sacred sites, their experiences with pilgrims from different faiths, and how religious tourism affected their incomes and community ties (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014).

We also looked at existing information, such as academic papers, local records, village administration files, and past research on how different religions get along and religious practices in Bali. These documents helped us understand the history and background of how Batu Gambir became a place for both interfaith religious tourism and pilgrimages (Susanto, 2015; Hermansyah, 2019).

## **2.3. Data Analysis Techniques**

The process of data analysis constituted an iterative and ongoing endeavor, initiated during the fieldwork phase and persisting through the interpretative stages (Miles et al., 2014). The phases of analysis comprised: (1) data reduction, which involved the systematic selection and categorization of field data pertinent to pilgrimage practices,

interfaith interactions, and economic activities; (2) data display, employing narrative descriptions and thematic matrices to delineate the interconnections among religious tourism, social cohesion, and economic ramifications; and (3) conclusion formulation and validation, wherein interpretations were rigorously tested against empirical evidence and pertinent theoretical frameworks.

The analytical approach incorporated the concept of thick description (Geertz, 1973) to elucidate the multifaceted meanings associated with pilgrimage activities at the Batu Gambir sacred sites. Religious tourism practices were construed not merely as observable movements of visitors, but rather as culturally significant actions that express a collective spirituality, mutual acknowledgment, and economic interdependence between the Hindu and Muslim communities.

To guarantee the reliability of the research findings, various triangulation methodologies were employed, encompassing source triangulation, method triangulation, and time triangulation (Denzin, 1978). Source triangulation involved the comparative analysis of insights from religious authorities, community leaders, economic participants, and local residents. Method triangulation incorporated diverse techniques such as observations, interviews, and document analysis, whereas time triangulation entailed conducting observations during a range of religious events and pilgrimage durations. Member checking was implemented with principal informants to validate the accuracy of interpretations and their contextual significance.

Throughout the entirety of the research endeavor, the investigator engaged in reflexivity, remaining cognizant of positionality, intrinsic values, and potential biases when analyzing the dynamics associated with interfaith pilgrimage (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This reflexive approach is paramount for ensuring that interpretations of religious tourism practices are ethically sound and accurately reflect the lived experiences of the Batu Gambir community.

## **3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

This section explores the findings through the lens of interfaith connections as they are implemented via religious tourism and pilgrimage practices at Batu Gambir sacred sites. The debate focuses on how pilgrimage activities, ritual participation, and socioeconomic connections surrounding sacred locations create, negotiate, and maintain societal peace rather than seeing it as an abstract state.

Sociological theories of structuration, symbolic interaction, and social capital repositioned within the context of religious tourism studies are used to analyze these results.

### **3.1. Structuration of Interfaith Relations through Pilgrimage Practices**

The results, which are based on Anthony Giddens' structuration theory (1984), show that regular pilgrimage-related activities at holy locations in Batu Gambir continuously recreate interfaith partnerships. Temple festivals (*piodalan*), Islamic memorial events, and collective upkeep of sacred landscapes are examples of religious tourist activities that serve as recurrent social practices that facilitate the interaction between structure and agency. Pilgrimage activities do not create the social structure of peace; rather, frequent involvement in communal sacred spaces creates it. Hindu and Muslim residents operate as agents who consciously adjust religious standards to accommodate interfaith tourists and pilgrims. These adaptive behaviors eventually become established as regional standards that regulate ritual collaboration, economic trade, and pilgrimage behavior. Thus, interfaith harmony in Batu Gambir arises as a structured product of pilgrimage routines, not only as inherited tradition. Sacred locations in Batu Gambir act as social venues where religious tourism concurrently reinforces spiritual meaning and social order. The continuation of interfaith pilgrimage rituals indicates how social stability is deliberately fostered via reflective involvement rather than imposed through formal control.

### **3.2. Symbolic Interaction in Interfaith Pilgrimage Encounters**

From the perspective of Herbert Blumer's symbolic interactionism (1969), pilgrimage interactions at Batu Gambir are rich places of symbolic meaning-making. Religious symbols such as offerings, greetings, ceremonial dress, and shared work during ceremonies serve as interactional cues by which pilgrims from various religions understand one another's presence. According to field observations, interactions between Hindus and Muslims during pilgrimage ceremonies involve active symbolic negotiation rather than passive cohabitation. Hindu participants view Muslim participation as moral solidarity, while Muslim pilgrims perceive ritual activities as shows of respect rather than doctrinal support when they attend Hindu temple ceremonies. These common readings solidify into a collective symbolic notion of pilgrimage as a place of unity rather than exclusivity via repeated contacts. Balinese

ideas such as *pawongan* (human interactions) and *palemahan* (harmony with nature) for realize intersect with Islamic ideals of *ukhuwah* and social justice, producing a symbolic framework that enables interfaith pilgrimage to function without tension. In this way, pilgrimage activities at Batu Gambir exemplify what Blumer describes as meanings that originate from interaction and are continuously altered via experience and real action.

### **3.3. Social and Spiritual Values as Capital in Religious Tourism**

According to Coleman's (1990) and Putnam's (1993) theories, the results show that pilgrimage-based interactions at Batu Gambir produce high social capital. Repeated interactions between locals, pilgrims, ritual organizers, and local traders strengthen trust, reciprocity, and interfaith networks. Spiritual principles such as *ngayah* (selfless service) and *silaturahmi* (affective bonding) serve as cultural resources that maintain religious tourist practices. These ideals reduce social barriers between pilgrims of many faiths and promote collaboration in the administration of holy locations, visitor accommodations, and ceremonial resource distribution. According to Bourdieu (1986), these ideals serve as *habitus*, influencing societal attitudes toward openness and friendliness in pilgrimage settings. By integrating economic activities such as food distribution, agricultural exchange, and ritual preparation within moral and spiritual standards that are shared across religious boundaries, religious tourism at Batu Gambir fosters social cohesion rather than creating rivalry.

### **3.4. Patterns of Interfaith Interaction at Sacred Sites**

The research findings reveal that social life in Batu Gambir is characterized by active coexistence that is continuously enacted through mutual involvement with sacred sites and pilgrimage related activities involving both Hindu and Muslim populations. These two groups engage in intense social interactions, ritual involvement, and economic activity related to religious events and local pilgrimage flows rather than living apart socially or geographically. Since the nineteenth century, when the Muslim community started to settle in an area primarily inhabited by Hindus, social, ritual, and economic interactions have been based on mutual trust and respect, which have developed through a long historical process of migration and cultural assimilation (Subagiasta, 2020).



**Table 1: Interfaith Cooperation in Environmental Maintenance Supporting Sacred Sites and Pilgrimage Routes**

Social interaction in Batu Gambir is both symbolic and practical, wherein the meaning of harmony is constructed through concrete everyday actions. In social activities such as mutual cooperation to repair village roads, maintain water sources, or support religious ceremonies, interfaith participation is a common occurrence. A Hindu resident, for example, helps prepare food during the celebration of the

Prophet’s Birthday, while a Muslim resident helps maintain security when Hindus conduct piodalan at the village temple. These actions demonstrate that social harmony in Batu Gambir is rooted in local cultural values such as *menyama braya* (brotherhood) and *ngayah* (voluntary service), which function as collective habitus in Bourdieu’s (1986) terms.



**Table 2: Interfaith Pilgrimage Activities at a Shared Sacred Grave Site in Batu Gambir**

Additionally, a model of structural pluralism (Geertz, 1960) is reflected in the social structure of Batu Gambir, where religious identity does not function as a defining limit in public and pilgrimage-related life. Hindu and Muslim populations share economic spaces, educational settings, and social institutions in an equal manner, especially those tied to religious tourist activities. Local leadership decisions, such as choosing the head of the hamlet, are made by group discussion rather than religious affiliation. This inclusive governance structure fosters trust and guarantees that the management of sacred sites and religious events remains jointly owned, reflecting concepts of social meritocracy and shared trust (Putnam, 1993).

In the context of Giddens's structuration (1984), this social harmony is the result of the reproduction of longstanding social practices. Through reflective actions and repeated engagement in social routines, the people of Batu Gambir unconsciously create a value system that supports interreligious stability. The social structure and customary norms that exist

are derived from everyday social practices, not solely from formal institutions or external policies.

### 3.5. Local Spirituality and the Symbolism of Shared Pilgrimage

The field findings reveal that spirituality in Batu Gambir is inclusive and expressed across religious barriers within pilgrimage and sacred-site contexts. Religious symbols serve as media for social integration between pilgrims and locals as well as indicators of group identification in a variety of customary rituals associated with sacred sites and religious gatherings. For instance, Muslim and Hindu locals engage in ritual-related activities together at the *ngusaba desa* rite without giving priority to theological differences. While Hindu residents participate in group prayers utilizing protocols tailored to the interfaith setting, Muslim residents help prepare ritual offerings. This practice follows Geertz's (1973) understanding of religion as a system of symbols that serves to mold feelings and motivations, notably in communal religious and pilgrimage related.



**Table 3: Interfaith Social Interaction as Everyday Practice within Religious Tourism Spaces**

In Batu Gambir, a social ethic that prioritizes harmony, balance, and shared responsibility in the administration of sacred sites is deeply entwined with local spirituality. Islamic concepts of *ukhuwah insaniyah* (human brotherhood) coexist with Hindu beliefs like *Tri Hita Karana*, which emphasizes harmonious interactions between humanity, the god, and environment. This convergence of values offers a common moral basis for maintaining pilgrimage customs and interfaith contact at Batu Gambir's sacred sites rather than creating theological conflict.

Consequently, the ceremonial life of the community demonstrates a sort of social spirituality in which religious devotion prioritizes communal benefit, hospitality toward visitors, and togetherness over doctrinal exclusivity (Muhaimin, 2001; Tilaar, 2004).

*Selamatan*, *ngayah*, and *gotong royong* are examples of complex social symbols that have meanings that cut over religious boundaries and function as a symbolic language in religious tourism and pilgrimage interactions. These emblems strengthen social cohesiveness around sacred locations and

promote cooperation between locals and tourists. According to Blumer's symbolic interactionism (1969), rather than being determined by a single religious authority, the meanings associated with these rituals are the result of continuous processes of collective negotiation and interpretation. Because the notion of peace is constantly replicated and refreshed through contemplative social interaction ingrained in shared pilgrimage experiences, this dynamic process helps explain why interreligious interactions in Batu Gambir remain comparatively free from conflict.

### 3.6. Moral Economy and the Socio-Economic Impacts of Pilgrimage

At Batu Gambir, religious tourism creates a unique moral economy in which business dealings are guided by ethical standards and trust rather than just market principles. Strong social embeddedness is shown in the informal nature of pilgrimage-related

transactions, such as food distribution, cattle exchange, and agricultural cooperation (Thompson, 1971; Scott, 1985).

Institutions such as *subak* and *banjar* illustrate structural inclusion by permitting Muslim involvement in institutions historically entrenched in Hindu culture. By ensuring that pilgrimage-related financial gains are shared throughout religious communities, this inclusivity strengthens social cohesion. According to Durkheim (1912), this is an example of mechanical solidarity based on a common ritual experience. In line with Islamic *islah* and the Hindu ethic of *tat twam asi*, the moral economy also serves as a conflict-mitigation mechanism in which disagreements resulting from economic or ceremonial activity are settled through deliberative processes (*mebarung*). By preserving all stakeholder confidence, these systems guarantee the viability of religious tourism.



Table 4: Interfaith Pilgrimage Activities at a Shared Sacred Grave Site in Batu Gambir

### 3.7. Broader Implications of Interfaith Religious Tourism

The study's conclusions show that the social harmony ideals upheld in Batu Gambir's hallowed locations and pilgrimage sites have a great deal of potential as contextual learning materials for social education. Approaches based on local knowledge from interfaith pilgrimage and lived religious tourism can enhance students' social engagement, tolerance, and character development within the context of modern social learning (Kemendikbudristek, 2022). Values such as mutual cooperation, respect, and interreligious openness

observed in the management of sacred sites and pilgrimage activities can be integrated into learning themes linked to cultural diversity, community cooperation, and patterns of social interaction in Indonesian culture.

Teachers can use the Batu Gambir case study as an empirical example of how interfaith religious tourism and pilgrimage serve as regular social behaviors through contextual and place-based learning techniques (Gruenewald, 2003). By interacting with this local story, students not only gain a theoretical understanding of social principles but also comprehend how cooperative and coexisting ideals

are practiced in actual places of worship and pilgrimage. Additionally, the Pancasila Student Profile's dimensions faith, global diversity, and

mutual cooperation align with the interfaith behaviors seen in Batu Gambir.



*Table 5: Ritual Atmosphere and Pilgrimage Experience at Batu Gambir Sacred Sites*

By incorporating values derived from religious tourism and pilgrimage experiences as learning resources, social education can contribute to broader processes of nation-building rooted in Indonesia's lived social realities. The integration of social learning with local wisdom emerging from sacred-site practices strengthens educational orientations toward fostering socially responsible and culturally sensitive individuals. In this sense, Batu Gambir is not merely a research site, but also a contextual model illustrating how interfaith religious tourism can inform multicultural learning practices applicable to other regions in Indonesia.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

According to the study's findings, social harmony between the Hindu and Islamic populations in Batu Gambir is the outcome of a complicated social process in which social capital, local spirituality, and social structure interact to create a stable and harmonious social order. This harmony is not created on its own; rather, it is the result of ongoing social practice reproduction, the symbolization of common cultural values, and flexible local leadership that reacts positively to social change.

From the standpoint of Giddens' structuration theory (1984), pilgrimage activities and interreligious behaviors around sacred sites in Batu Gambir demonstrate a dialectical link between structure and agency that continuously reproduces social order.

According to symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969), on the other hand, harmony is socially built through shared symbols that are incorporated into regular interactions in places of pilgrimage and religious tourism. Strong social capital, as described by Putnam (1993) and Bourdieu (1986), works as a binding force that sustains trust and solidarity beyond religious boundaries.

The key relevance of this study lies in the significance of integrating local values such as tolerance, mutual collaboration (*gotong royong*), and social balance into social learning processes at the junior high school level. Students' character can be strengthened in responding to the difficulties of globalization, which frequently erode social cohesion, by using learning methodologies based on lived interfaith experiences and local wisdom. Religious tourism and pilgrimage traditions can function as contextual learning models that prioritize cooperative, multicultural, contextual, and reflective learning, as the Batu Gambir case illustrates.

In terms of theoretical contribution, this study enhances sociological discourse by demonstrating how social and cultural institutions that foster cooperation, trust, and empathy have a significant impact on interreligious relations rather than only theological concepts. From a practical standpoint, the findings affirm that local spirituality entrenched in sacred-site rituals can function as a mechanism of social resilience amid fast societal transition. In the

field of education, this study emphasizes how crucial it is to incorporate social harmony ideals into curricula and learning procedures, establishing schools and other educational establishments as crucial venues for raising generations that exemplify justice, tolerance, and civic duty.

## 5. DECLARATIONS

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